

# THE USE OF *AEGISUB* IN TEACHING AUDIOVISUAL TRANSLATION CLASSES: A REVIEW ON IT-BASED SUBTITLING COURSE

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## Abstract

The use of technology in subtitling practices reaches its peak nowadays. A number of tools have been used to maximize the quality of audiovisual/screen translation and to have the translation works done more efficiently. One of the tools is *AEGISUB* software. This software is popular among fansub translators as a free tool to help produce the desirable subtitles. This study reviews the use of *AEGISUB* software in a classroom project of subtitling course. By using the classroom observation method during the course, the researchers recorded and reviewed the applications of the software conducted by the students. Based on the observation, the students performed the intended procedures to create subtitles of the target text. By applying the software, the students learned well how to deal with technical shortage as well as linguistic barriers of verbal communication.

**Keywords:** *AEGISUB* software, Subtitling

## Introduction

This paper is not intended to induce the audiences to follow the idea blindly applying the so-called *AEGISUB* software in the subtitling course. The software is just one of the tools that has been proven effective to attract greater interests of the students to do subtitling works. The Subtitling course is given in the sixth semester where the students have passed some prerequisite courses such as Advanced Genre-Based Grammar and Theory of Translation. The latter two courses are designed to help the students easily deal with translation works including the audiovisual translation. The students have formerly been familiar with non-audiovisual translation works. They have been taught to start as well as to gain a final remark of translation works in practice. In other words, the students are, obviously, challenged to improve their translation skills a lot more in the Subtitling course. This course employs software named *AEGISUB* to create and modify subtitles in both source and target languages.

Creating subtitles in the source language is one thing but creating and modifying subtitles in the target language is another thing. The main subject of the course is employing the software to create subtitles in the target language. The interesting part of this subject is that there are still a large number of videos available on Youtube which remain blank with no subtitles either in the source or target language. These resourceful media are obviously becoming a wide area of practices for the students to create subtitles in the target language. Creating subtitles in the target language here means conducting an audiovisual translation in accordance with the proposed subtitling guidelines. The guidelines are made worldwide to help any party interested in making subtitles acceptable in the target audience. The guidelines are even made self-explanatory, so that the students of English department are

guaranteed to have a quick understanding as they learn the English guidelines by themselves. Understanding subtitling guidelines is only half of the formula. To complete the formula, the students need to make use of software named *AEGISUB* 3.2.2 version when creating subtitles on a video.

As we all realize that the use of technology is found in almost every walk of life. In the education world, teachers of all disciplines make use of technology to help students find and generate their hidden creativities in a classroom project. Classroom projects are sometimes assigned to benefit the students to get used to working with a certain kind of technology. It is also Technology that would lead the students to an easy life in the future. Today technology is unthinkableably reachable by people of all ages. It is undeniable that even younger generations are familiar enough with technology at their early ages. The students of English Department at UDINUS are among the younger generations. Although they concentrate on English language as their main subject, yet most of the classroom projects are IT-based projects. One classroom project using IT-based tools is in the Subtitling course. One of the tools is designed to help people or the students around the world succeed in subtitling works. The tool is named *AEGISUB* 3.2.2 version. It is a free, cross-platform open source tool for creating and modifying subtitles. *AEGISUB* makes it quick and easy to time subtitles to audio, and many powerful tools for styling them, including a built-in real-time video preview ([www.AEGISUB.org](http://www.AEGISUB.org)). With the software, the students in the Subtitling course are taught to create subtitles and render the language used in the videos to the desirable target language. Linguistic barriers such as transferring idiomatic expressions or cultural terms to the target language are becoming our concern in this study review. Another point of concern here is about the use of *AEGISUB* software by the students. The writers are so eager to find out if the students are skillful enough to apply the software in the classroom project. However, the study was conducted to come up with valuable answers to those problems. In the long run, this study is expected to become a resourceful media for the students with greater interest to create and modify subtitles in both source and target languages.

## **Review of Related Literature**

### ***Subtitling framework***

Subtitling emerges as one the most explored discipline within the field of translation studies. This can be proven from the abundant publication on subtitling and subtitle teaching (Orero, 2004; Cintas-Remael, 2007; Cintas-Anderman, 2009). This emergence requires those involved in the academic world to be creative and stay up-to-date because subtitling theories and practices develop dynamically. Nowadays, the development addresses the incorporation of subtitling practice and subtitling technology.

This issue is considered important since subtitling practices gain a great advantage from the use of technology operated by novice or professional subtitle translators. The use of subtitling technology itself proves a major advance to the quality of subtitle as well as learners' translational competence (Talavan, 2006; Gambier, 2007; and McLoughlin, 2009). Therefore, based on their propositions, the benefits avalanche greatly, i.e. improved quality of subtitle and student's translational skill.

According to Vinczeová (2014), subtitling is also intertwined with the use of certain strategies to overcome constraints. This is supported by Georgakopolou's statement (2009:29) that deliberately says "there are numerous constraints in subtitling, and there is no systematic recipe to be followed". In this paper, constraints

are referred to as *problems* rather than *difficulties*. We take that standpoint in reference to what Nord (1988) and Hale-Campbell (2002) have already stated. Here Nord (ibid.) defines *problems* as “something objective that every translator has to solve for a certain task”. To conform to subtitling *problems*, many have arrived with the suggestion of using subtitling strategies or methods. Furthermore, in the light of the results of various subtitling studies, reduction has been widely acknowledged as somehow banal.

Naturally, it appears because subtitle has limited time and space of appearance. However, as Pošta (2011) states, the use of other strategies or methods are also of great significance. He further explains that the use of simplification, compensation, normalization, naturalization, and explication helps subtitle translators condense the linguistic form without losing the intended meaning. However, the application of the so-called subtitling strategies or methods is not the only determining factor in the practice, since the intervention of the technical feature of subtitling plays an important role.

One of the most important factors in subtitling is the timing or spotting (Vinczeová, ibid.). To our knowledge, measuring perfect timing in subtitling is an intricate work to do. However, using subtitling software, such as *AEGISUB*, to measure perfect *timing* is deemed particularly appropriate (Sierra, 2014). To our knowledge, although *AEGISUB* is free software, it is equipped with a capability to do so. Thus, we feel that it is important to bring in this software in our audiovisual translation classes.

In order to introduce subtitle translators, especially to novice translators—students, in this case—teachers, professors, and/or facilitators must teach what is needed and urged from the professional translation market. This notion is underlined as a term called *praxeology*. According to Vinczeová (2014:91) *praxeology* is “teaching the students about the situation on the market and the real-life opportunities for a *subtitler*...including practical matters as freelancing, prices, software, and tools”. From this point of departure, we agree that to surmount practical and theoretical constraints with improvements, such as: teaching subtitling at academic institutions or researching subtitling (Pošta, ibid.).

To confirm the importance of introducing student to *AEGISUB* software, this paper needs to be supported by claims that the basics of technical features of subtitling, such as *timing*, CPS (Character per second), and length of subtitles, are vital pieces that can only be processed solely by using the software. Moreover, Carroll-Ivarsson (1988); Karamitroglou (1997); and Pošta (2011) in Vinczeová (2014:94) mention other basic technical requirements, such as:

1. Maximum two lines in one subtitle;
2. Number of characters should be limited to forty;
3. Maximum duration of a full two-line subtitle should be around 6 seconds;
4. Maximum duration of a full single-line subtitle should be around 3 seconds;
5. CPS recommended to 12;
6. Punctuation according to the standards of the recipient country should be used.

These basic technical requirements can be analyzed by filling the subtitles produced into *AEGISUB* and examining the video with subtitles, along with the intention of finding any inconsistency, whilst presenting technical information on the software panels. However, there are errors that become too redundant in the context of students or novice translators translating a subtitle. Vinczeová (2014) identifies that the errors range from “too short pauses between subtitles, dialogues in one line,

exceeding character number, and longest and short line.” Nevertheless Vinczeová’s research suggests that subtitling software helps establish zero major errors.

To add the complexity of subtitling and teaching it, we also find that the success of subtitling is not only justified by conforming to the basic technical requirements mentioned above. McLoughlin (2009:178) recognizes some aspects that also bring intricacy, they are:

1. Linguistics (morphology-syntax);
2. *Paralinguistics* (volume of voice, pauses, etc.);
3. Iconographic (images not mentioned in the dialogue but important for transmission of meaning);
4. Mobility code (*proxemic* and kinetic elements which could determine, for example, whose lines are subtitled first when many characters are speaking at once).

In the case of interlinking subtitling and its processing software, a positive result yields from her research. Based on a rigorous observation, she claims that the use of subtitling software eases subtitle translators’ work and minimizes subtitling errors. Moreover, it is also proven enhance translators’ translational competence, i.e. SL knowledge, text-related knowledge, TL knowledge, real-world knowledge, and contrastive knowledge (McLoughlin, *ibid.*).

### ***A brief overview of AEGISUB***

*AEGISUB* was originally created as a tool to make typesetting, particularly in anime fansubs, a less painful experience. At the time of the start of the project, many other programs that supported the Advanced Substation Alpha format lacked (and in many cases, still lack; development on several competing programs have been dropped for various reasons completely unrelated to *AEGISUB*) many vital functions, or were too buggy and/or unreliable to be really useful.

Since then, *AEGISUB* has grown into a fully fledged, highly customizable subtitle editor. It features a lot of convenient tools to help you with timing, typesetting, editing and translating subtitles, as well as a powerful scripting environment called Automation (originally mostly intended for creating karaoke effects, Automation can now be used much else, including creating macros and various other convenient tools). (<http://docs.aegisub.org/manual/>)

### **Method**

This study was a descriptive qualitative research and it was intended to review the process of students’ subtitling translation. The task of subtitling was given to the students in the class of Audiovisual Translation or Subtitling. Twenty students consisting of eight males and twelve females were involved in this project. The observation was conducted during the process of making a subtitle. Furthermore, the students selected in the research were not alerted of what we would be observing at. The main information they had received before was that they were going to be the subjects of research. No detailed requirement was put forth to take part in the experiment but active contribution.

The steps in conducting this research were as follows:

1. Profiling students’ level of competence;
2. Introducing *AEGISUB* software;
3. Showing the main functions of the software, such as how to load, open, play, and save a video;
4. Allowing students to use the software (trial stage);

5. Asking students to look up the instructions for subtitling activities (observation stage);
6. Showing a video in Bahasa Indonesia with no subtitles and students are asked to give oral reflection (observation stage);
7. Translating the video using *AEGISUB* software (observation stage);
8. Comparing different results (evaluation stage);
9. Discussing the results (evaluation stage);
10. Writing the reflection for this paper.

## Findings and Discussion

Based on the observation, the following figures explain how the students applied the *AEGISUB* software and rendered the dialogs to the target language:



Figure 1: Placing the installed software and a video in one folder

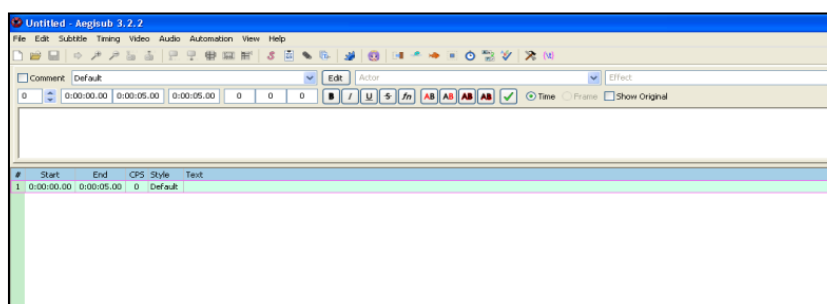


Figure 2: Double clicking the *Aegisub* file to start with the software

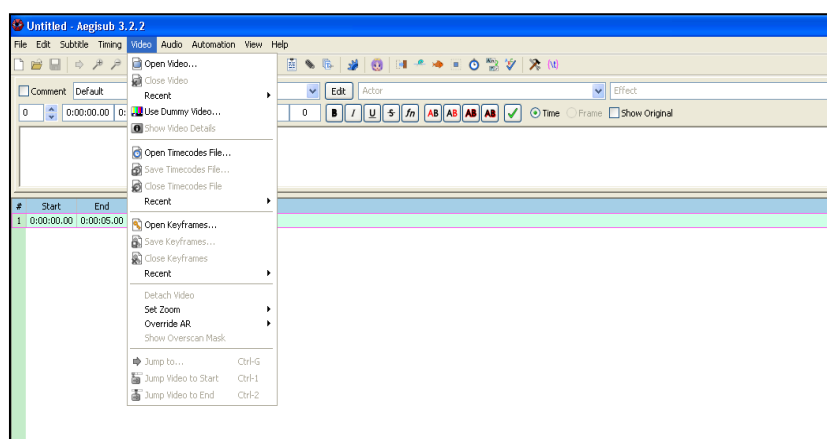


Figure 3: Opening the videos to the provided space in the software

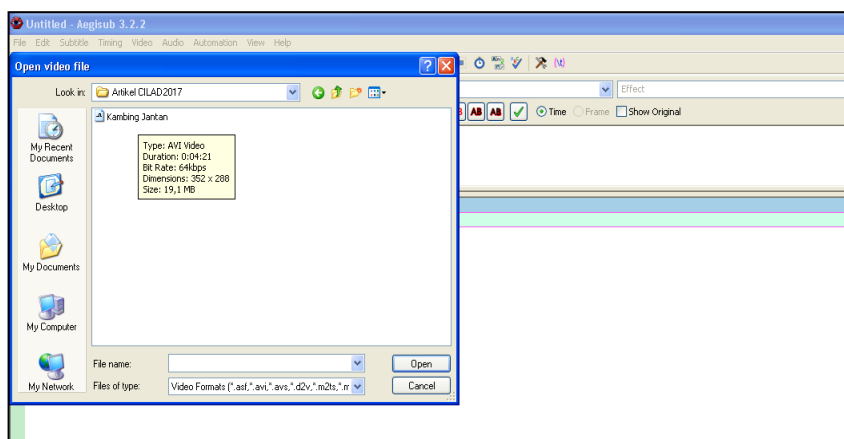


Figure 4: Selecting the videos to be loaded on the software

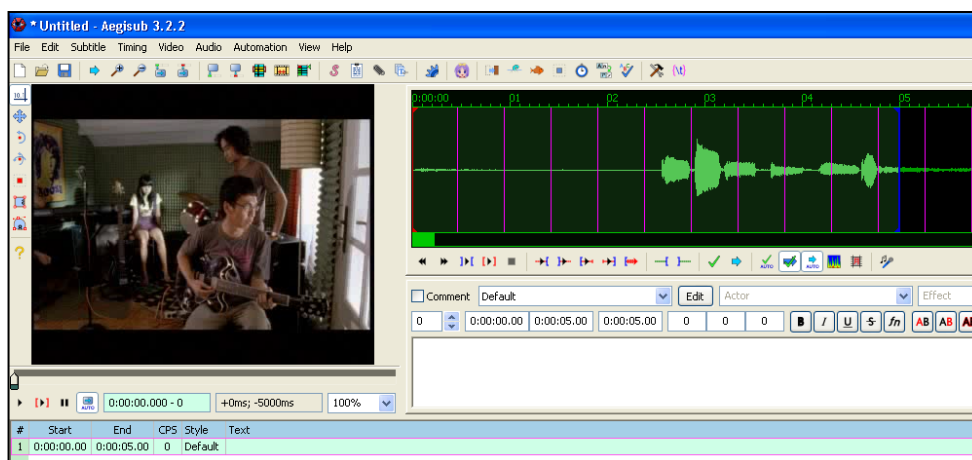


Figure 5: Starting with the timing while loading the subtitles

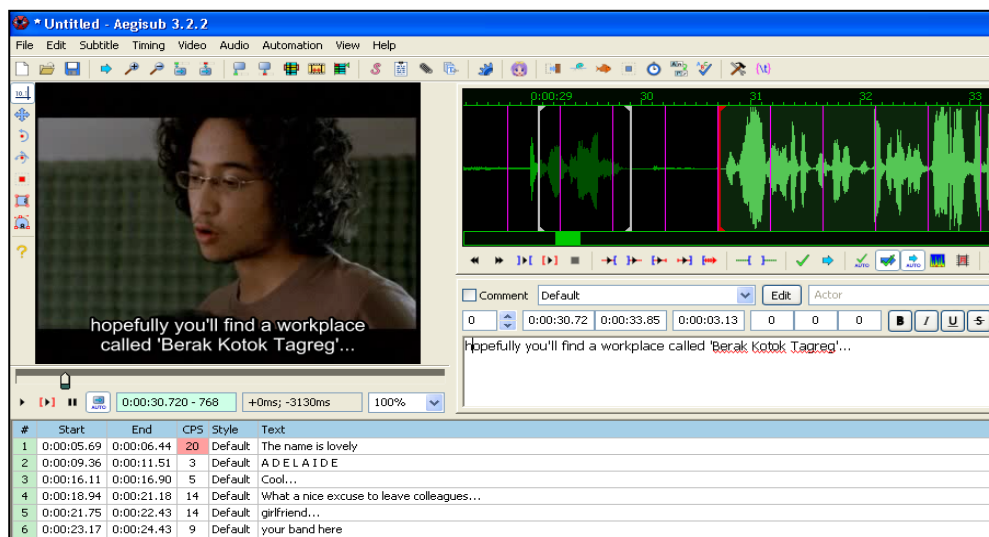


Figure 6: Keeping up with the subtitles in the target language

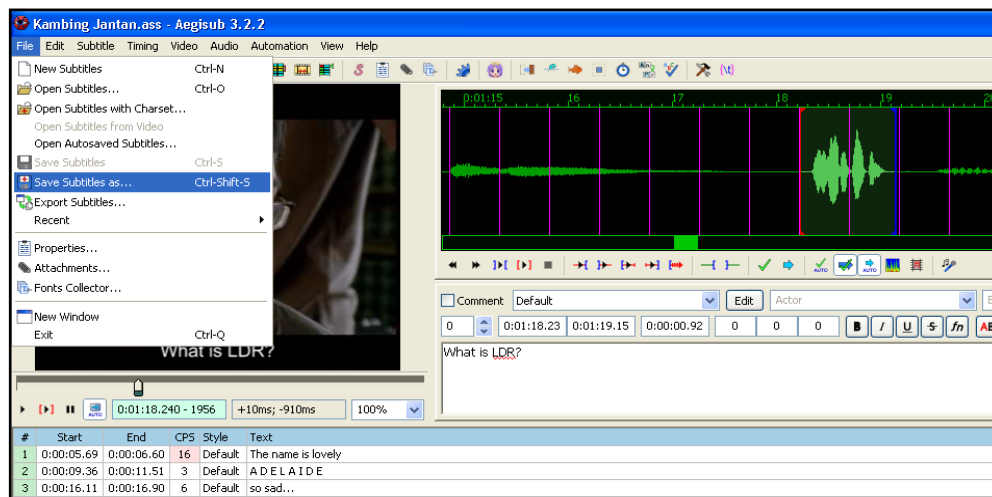


Figure 7: Saving the video after completing the subtitles in the target language



Figure 8: Saving the subtitled file with the same name as the video file's name in the same folder

From the observation activities, it is found that 90% of the students taking part in the research were good at applying the software. It took only one meeting for the students in the second week of the semester to be able to put the software instructions into practice. As they got involved actively in using the software week after week, they became familiar with it. They quickly knew how to find the software on the internet, to install it as well as to operate all pull-downmenus within. However, from a short interview with the students, we found out that it is no longer a new stuff in IT world for them as they get accessed to the internet on daily basis. This is the reason why they did not need longer time to familiarize themselves with the *AEGISUB* software.

## Conclusion

Since the participants in the observation class are the sixth semester students, many of them have had enough background knowledge about Translation in the earlier semesters. At the same time, they have been familiar with IT-based products even before they entered College. Therefore, the success rate of operating the software is considerably high. From the results of the study, we believe that the students can experience the classroom project on subtitling like in a real professional atmosphere of subtitling works. However, this software is neither the first nor the last tool to be used in subtitling works. It is suggested that for a better quality in subtitling works, students are advised to use more advanced tools to cope with.



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